

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Dear Program Directors and ESOL Coordinators,

This message contains important information about changes in the BEST Plus assessment.

Starting July 1, 2016, programs using the BEST Plus will need to use BEST Plus 2.0 for pre- and post-testing for the National Reporting System (NRS). As per OCTAE (Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education) guidelines, programs will no longer be allowed to use the original BEST Plus for NRS reporting purposes after that date.

Below are key changes that BEST Plus 2.0 will bring to ACLS-funded ABE programs:

1. New NRS Score Ranges

- The new NRS score ranges for BEST Plus 2.0, effective July 1, 2016, are listed below.

#	Educational Functioning Level (EFL)	NRS Score Range
1.	Beginning ESL Literacy	88 to 361
2.	Low Beginning ESL	362 to 427
3.	High Beginning ESL	428 to 452
4.	Low Intermediate ESL	453 to 484
5.	High Intermediate ESL	485 to 524
6.	Advanced ESL	525 to 564
	Exit criteria from NRS	565 and higher

- SMARTT (and School Brains moving forward) will be updated to reflect the new NRS score ranges beginning July 1, 2016.

2. Pre- and Post-Testing

Please note that you cannot pre-test with the original BEST Plus and post-test with BEST Plus 2.0 for NRS reporting.

- Starting July 1, 2016, programs must use BEST Plus 2.0 for pre- and post-testing for NRS reporting. This means that scores from the original BEST Plus cannot carry over into the new program year.

For example, BEST Plus tests administered after April 30, 2016 (FY'16) cannot be copied over into FY'17. Returning students will need to be retested with BEST Plus 2.0 per NRS guidelines.

3. Instructional Hours

- ACLS policy for pre- and post- testing remains the same: pre-test within 2-4 weeks of class placement and post-test after 65 h of instruction.
Please refer to the ACLS website (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/>) for more information related to current ACLS assessment policies. ACLS assessment policy overrides the test developer's policy.

4. BEST Plus 2.0 Rollout

- The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) will provide each state and each program with one complimentary BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide (TAG) and one USB drive that includes the BEST Plus 2.0 test administration software and the new score management software. The BEST Plus 2.0 test administration software and management software will be available only on USB.
- To ensure that CAL has the most updated shipping information, they will be contacting programs in February 2016 with a link to a web page for programs to update their contact and shipping information.
- Watch for CAL's email and postcard with the link. For test security, please note that CAL will only send the complimentary BEST Plus 2.0 materials to programs that have confirmed their shipping information.

5. Pre-Order BEST Plus 2.0 Starting May 16, 2016

- Prices for BEST Plus 2.0 are now available on the BEST Plus 2.0 web page: <http://www.cal.org/aea/>. Price changes for computer test administrations will go into effect on July 1, 2016.
- Computer test administrations ordered at any time will continue to be credited to the programs' accounts and will not be affected by the transition to BEST Plus 2.0. For example, if a program has 50 BEST Plus administrations left after they have installed the BEST Plus 2.0, those 50 BEST Plus administrations will be available in BEST Plus 2.0. Similarly, if a program has any unused test administrations left to activate in their

accounts or purchases more tests between now and July 1, 2016, those administrations will be available after July 1, 2016 as well.

6. BEST Plus Certification Training

- Current BEST Plus test administrators who complete the required certification requirements do not need new training and can administer BEST Plus 2.0 right away. New test administrators will need to attend the BEST Plus 2.0 trainings administered by the SABES PD Center for ABE Assessment (please check the SABES calendar for training dates).

7. Scoring Refresher Toolkit and Scoring Refresher CDs

- The BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit will not change at this time. Practitioners can continue to use it with BEST Plus 2.0.

8. Original BEST Plus Materials and Computer Administrations

- Programs with computer test administration balances in their accounts and on testing computers will not have to make any changes once the BEST Plus 2.0 software is installed. Computer test administrations from BEST Plus will carry over into BEST Plus 2.0.
- To finish their fiscal year 2016 data collection (i.e., scoring, data entry, and NRS reporting), NRS users will need to use the original BEST Plus score management software on the Red Test CD (dated February 2005) or on the original BEST Plus USB. Programs should save a copy of the Red BEST Plus CD or original BEST Plus USB for this purpose.
- There are no changes to the scoring rubric.
- Programs will be able to download a free PDF of the scoring and software sections of the new BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide (TAG) to update their current TAG. ACLS will notify practitioners when the free PDF will be available (most likely spring, 2016). New test administrators will need a new BEST Plus 2.0 TAG after July 1, 2016.
- Original BEST Plus test materials will not be valid for NRS reporting for Fiscal Year 2017 or beyond.

9. BEST Plus 2.0 Webinars

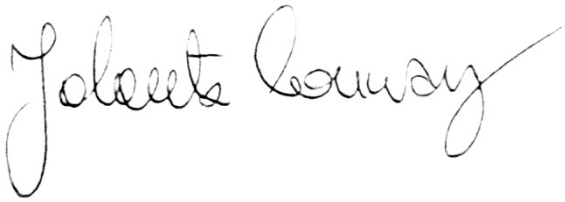
- CAL will be conducting webinars for NRS users. Please see below information about the webinars. Click on your preferred webinar date below to register.

1. [February 17 at 10 AM ET](#)
2. [February 17 at 4 PM ET](#)

- These webinars will be recorded and posted on the CAL website within a week. Anyone who registers will get a link to the recording even if they were not able to attend.

If you have any questions regarding BEST Plus, please contact Dana Varzan-Parker, Assessment Specialist, at dvarzan-parker@doe.mass.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jolanta Conway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jolanta Conway
ABE State Director

